

REMARKS

Applicant thanks the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 1-15 are currently being prosecuted. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider his rejections in view of the amendments and remarks as set forth below.

Telephone Interview

Applicant notes with appreciation the courtesies extended by Examiner Nguyen in a telephone interview on May 27, 2003. During that interview, the Examiner considered the attached changes to claim 1. The Examiner indicated that these proposed changes would overcome the outstanding rejection. This change has now been implemented in both claims 1 and 11 by way of the present Amendment.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-7 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by Shimizu (U.S. Patent No. 5,034,640). This rejection is respectfully traversed. Claim 1 now includes a description of the finger as having a longitudinal axis extending in the circumferential direction. The Shimizu reference has a finger but extends in the axial direction instead. Since the Examiner indicated that this change would overcome this rejection, Applicant submits that claim 1 and claims 2-10 which depend therefrom are allowable.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 8-15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over Shimizu in view of Masrodonato et al (U.S. Patent No. 3,732,616). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

First, it is noted that the Examiner did not include claim 15 in the statement of the rejection on the last two lines of page 3 of the action. However, since claim 15 was included at the end of this section on page 5, Applicant assumes that claim 15 was meant to be included also.

In view of the allowability of claim 1, Applicant submits that claims 8-10 which depend therefrom are likewise considered to be allowable.

Claim 11 now includes the same limitation added to claim 1 and also overcomes this rejection for the same reasons recited above in regard to claim 1. Accordingly, Applicant submits that claim 11 and claims 12-15 which depend therefrom are likewise considered to be allowable.

Conclusion

In view of the above remarks, it is believed that the claims clearly distinguish over the patents relied on by the Examiner, either alone or in combination. In view of this, reconsideration of the rejections and allowance of all the claims are respectfully requested.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Robert F. Gnuse (Reg. No.

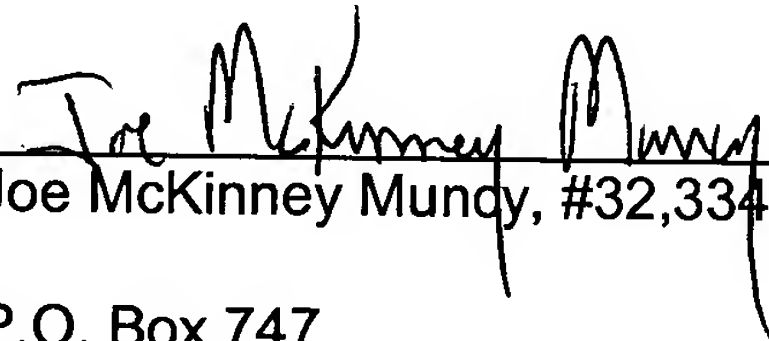
Appl. No. 10/077,974

27,295) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

By 
Joe McKinney Mundy, #32,334

 KM/RFG/ags

P.O. Box 747
Falls Church, VA 22040-0747
(703) 205-8000